

The President

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EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON

October 11, 1957

MEMORANDUM FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

SUBJECT: Implications of the Soviet Earth
Satellite for U. S. Security

REFERENCES: A. NSC 5520
B. NSC Actions Nos. 1656, 1713 and 1799

The National Security Council, the Acting Secretary of the Treasury, the Attorney General, the Director, Bureau of the Budget, the Special Assistant to the President for Disarmament, Brig. Gen. Alfred D. Starbird for the Special Assistant to the President for Atomic Energy, the Director, National Science Foundation, the President, National Academy of Sciences, and the Acting Federal Civil Defense Administrator, at the 339th NSC meeting on October 10, 1957 (NSC Action No. 1799):

a. Discussed the subject in the light of:

- (1) An intelligence briefing by the Director of Central Intelligence on the Soviet earth satellite, its relation to the Soviet ballistic missiles program, and world reaction to the Soviet earth satellite.
- (2) A briefing by the Department of Defense on the information regarding the Soviet earth satellite obtained by scientific tracking, and on the status of the U. S. scientific satellite program under NSC 5520.
- (3) Comments by the Director, National Science Foundation, and the President, National Academy of Sciences, on the scientific implications of the Soviet earth satellite.
- (4) An appraisal by the Department of Defense of the military implications for U. S. security of the Soviet earth satellite.

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(5) An appraisal by the Department of State of the foreign policy implications for U. S. security of the Soviet earth satellite.

b. Noted the statement by the President on the subject issued at his press conference on October 9, 1957; and the President's statement at this meeting of the importance of adhering to the U. S. scientific satellite program under NSC 5520 as being well-reasoned and deliberately planned.

Accordingly the action in b above, as approved this date by the President, is transmitted herewith, together with a copy of the President's statement issued at his press conference on October 9, 1957, for information and guidance to all holders of NSC 5520.

JAMES S. LAY, JR.
Executive Secretary

cc: The Secretary of the Treasury
The Director, Bureau of the Budget
The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
The Director of Central Intelligence
The Director, National Science Foundation
The President, National Academy of Sciences

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October 9, 1957

James C. Hagerty, Press Secretary to the President

THE WHITE HOUSESTATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENTSUMMARY OF IMPORTANT FACTS IN
THE DEVELOPMENT BY THE UNITED
STATES OF AN EARTH SATELLITE

1. The first serious discussion of an earth satellite as a scientific experiment to be incorporated in the program for the International Geophysical Year took place at a meeting of the International Council of Scientific Unions in Rome in October 1954. At this meeting, at which Soviet scientists were present, a resolution was adopted by the scientists of the world recommending that "in view of the advanced state of present rocket techniques....thought be given to the launching of small satellite vehicles....."

2. Following this International Council meeting, the United States National Committee for International Geophysical Year, working under the sponsorship of the National Academy of Sciences, recommended that the United States institute a scientific satellite program. It was determined by the Administration that this program would be carried out as part of the United States' contribution to the International Geophysical Year.

Responsibility within the Government for scientific aspects of the program was assigned to the National Science Foundation, working in close cooperation with the United States National Committee for the International Geophysical Year. The Department of Defense was made responsible for supplying the rocketry needed to place a satellite in orbit without interfering with the top priority ballistic missile program. In line with the recommendations of a group of United States scientists advising the Department of Defense, the satellite project was assigned to the Naval Research Laboratory as Project VANGUARD.

3. On July 29, 1955, at a White House press conference, participated in by representatives of the National Science Foundation and the National Academy of Sciences, it was announced that plans "are going forward for the launching of small, unmanned earth circling satellites as part of the United States participation in the International Geophysical Year, which takes place between July 1957 and December 1958".

At this press conference it was specifically stated that the "data which will be collected from this program will be made available to all scientists throughout the world." The National Science Foundation, it was also announced, would work with the United States National Committee for the International Geophysical Year to formulate plans for the satellite and its instrumentation as well as plans for the preparation and deployment of the ground observer equipment required for the program.

4. In May of 1957, those charged with the United States satellite program determined that small satellite spheres would be launched as test vehicles during 1957 to check the rocketry, instrumentation, and ground stations and that the first fully-instrumented satellite vehicle would be launched in March of 1958. The first of these test vehicles is planned to be launched in December of this year.

As to the Soviet satellite, we congratulate Soviet scientists upon putting a satellite into orbit.

The United States satellite program has been designed from its inception for maximum results in scientific research. The scheduling of this program has been described to and closely coordinated with the International Geophysical Year scientists of all countries. As a result of passing full information on our project to the scientists of the world, immediate tracking of the United States satellite will be possible, and the world's scientists will know at once its orbit and the appropriate times for observation.

The rocketry employed by our Naval Research Laboratory for launching our VANGUARD has been deliberately separated from our ballistic missile efforts in order, first, to accent the scientific purposes of the satellite and, second, to avoid interference with top priority missile programs. Merging of this scientific effort with military programs could have produced an orbiting United States satellite before now, but to the detriment of scientific goals and military progress.

VANGUARD, for the reasons indicated, has not had equal priority with that accorded our ballistic missile work. Speed of progress in the satellite project cannot be taken as an index of our progress in ballistic missile work.

Our satellite program has never been conducted as a race with other nations. Rather, it has been carefully scheduled as part of the scientific work of the International Geophysical Year.

I consider our country's satellite program well designed and properly scheduled to achieve the scientific purposes for which it was initiated. We are, therefore, carrying the program forward in keeping with our arrangements with the international scientific community.

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